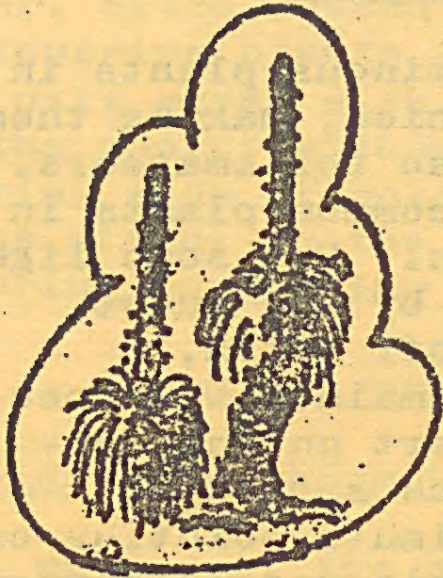


FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF BALLARAT

EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET - NOVEMBER 1978



President-	Mr. G. Binns	Ph. 323670
Vice-Pres-	Mr. R. Borch	428630
Secretary-	Miss H. Burgess	312210
Treasurer-	Mr. S. Reynolds	327721
Editor-	Mrs. B. Gray	322130

Meetings held in the Administrative Building at the School of Mines, Lydiard St. Sth. first Friday of each month at 8 p.m.

MEETING: 3rd November: Dr. F. Harrap- "Raven Mad"-  
Bird Watching in 3 Continents.

MEETING: 1st December: Mr. P. Skilbeck- Native Gardens-  
An Historical Survey.

EXCURSION: 5th November: Mt. Beckworth, Clunes Swamps.  
Leader G. Binns. Leaving Crockers Corner  
(Armstrong St. side) 9.30 a.m. Further  
meeting point Clunes Town Hall 2 p.m.

EXCURSION 3rd December: "Chiloglottis", Dean, the  
property of Mr. P. Skilbeck. On the Creswick-  
Dean Rd., right hand side going from Creswick,  
turn in at "Adekate Camp" road. Half Day.  
Christmas Afternoon-tea.

MAJOR MITCHELL PLATEAU CAMP-OUT: 11-12th November.

BARMAH FOREST CAMP-OUT: 18-19th November.

HERON ISLAND BIRD SCHOOL: 3-10th December. Naturalists  
Week 10-17th December. Bird School Programme and  
Naturalists School enrolment form and particulars  
obtainable from the Secretary.

OCTOBER MEETING: Mr. Geoff Hocking was welcomed as a  
new member, and wished a long and happy association  
with the Club. 39 members and visitors attended.



## SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON PAPILIONACEAE.

There are about 80 genera of leguminous plants in Australia and about 1000 different species, making them difficult for botanists and even more so for amateurs. The amount of name changing of fairly common plants in recent years has added to the confusion. But some light was thrown on this challenging subject by the guest speaker at our October meeting, Mr. Geoff Sitch, a nurseryman from Muckleford, near Castlemaine, who specialises in native plants and is an expert on the pea-flower family and on correas. Mr. Sitch showed a collection of slides of numerous pea plants pointing out their salient features and their possible use as garden plants. He introduced the slides with a brief botanical description.

These leguminous plants were nitrogenous enriching the soil through bacteria which lived in nodules on their roots, he said. Most of the seed needed fire or extreme heat to germinate. After pyro-germination they came up like weeds. As bigger plants grew up, pea plants declined because they needed a lot of light and not much root competition. The pea flowers died off until the seed lying dormant was germinated by the next fire.

Pea flowers in general (Papilionaceae) were irregular with five petals and 10 stamens; sometimes united, sometimes free, sometimes nine united and one free (as in *Kennedya*). The upright petal was the standard, the wide petals the wings and the two close downward petals, the keel, which held the stamens. *Pultenaea* usually had their flowers in a head and had large stipules. In a simple rule of thumb, *Pultenaea* suggested the shape of grannybonnets and *Dillwynia*, wider than deep, Mickey Mouse ears! Often the calyx determined the difference between *Pultenaea* and *Dillwynia*, or whether there was a bracteole or not. The length and lobes on the calyx tube, the number of ovules in the seed pod and the leaf shape were other factors in identification. In all pea flowers the ovary was superior, the fruit was always a legume and always dehiscent.



Mr. Sitch showed many beautiful slides of numerous pea-flowering plants - some common, some rare. One could only agree with his comment that the bush would be much the poorer without these plants. They provide a wonderful show of colour in the Spring and could be used to more effect in the garden. Mr. Sitch's solution to the Spring lawnmowing problem? *Acacia aculeatissima*!!

M. Rotheram.

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#### TASMANIAN WILDERNESS CALENDARS 1979.

A number of the above calendars have been ordered, to be delivered by the December meeting. Orders can be placed with the Secretary. Priced at approx. \$3.75 each, and they are a very beautiful calendar.

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#### L. C.C. BOTANICAL SURVEY

During the past fortnight Mr. Cliff Beauglehole, of the Portland F.N.C. and writer of the "Distribution of Vascular Flora of Victoria" currently in production, has been working as a consultant to the Land Conservation Council in the Ballarat Study area. Cliff has been surveying selected areas for data for the Ballarat Report and has been assisted in field work and recording by the Club members. Prevailing conditions have caused prolific flowering in the forest areas - an ideal state for the survey work.

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#### CLUB SUPPORT FOR CAMP OUT

The Western Victorian Field Naturalists Clubs' Association Camp Out of Oct. 20-22 has proved to be a commendable achievement for the Club. The cooperative effort of many members working together in subcommittees for Site Management, Catering, Excursions, Display, Trading, and Administration ensured that the program progressed successfully.

My thanks and congratulations are extended to all those members who contributed to this success.

Greg Binns. Pres.



W.V.F.N.C.A. CAMPOUT - SNAKE VALLEY.

The October Campout at Snake Valley was very successfully hosted by the Ballarat F.N.C. Perfect weather drew a large variety of plants, birds and insects from hiding, and all over the weekend a large number of Field Nats could be observed stalking their respective interests through the bush.

On Friday night, seven camping groups and numerous other visitors enjoyed the facilities of the camp. Lindsay Fink and Ken Hammond entertained arrivals with a display of slides showing items of interest in the Ballarat area.

Saturday morning began early with a daybreak excursion led by Greg. Binns and Jack Wheeler. A nest was sighted, with three white-faced heron fledgelings nearby. After breakfast, Harvey Hooper directed a party of 13 vehicles to the Linton Block. The neatly spun mud nest of a white-winged chough was noted and a nesting Goshawk was seen. A large "Greg Binns" was observed scrambling up the trunk of a nearby tree, attempting to elevate itself sufficiently to see inside the nest. On Saturday afternoon new arrivals were given a choice of excursions.

At Mt. Erip, a red-capped whistler was reported, but this turned out to be Peter Fry in Russian-red headwear, signalling his party together. A sacred Kingfisher was seen at close range and a Peregrine falcon gave a stirring display as it plunged and sliced at a pair of encroaching brown hawks. At Devil's Kitchen *Correa reflexa* was observed in full bloom.

A very successful day was also recorded at Enfield Forest (led by Pat and Bill Murphy) and at B.O.C. Block (led by Greg Binns). Sun Orchids were seen at Enfield.

John Clement's talk entitled "Deer in Australia" was enjoyed by all, as was the supper, skillfully prepared by our own catering staff. Greg. Binns and Margaret Rotheram were installed as the new President and



Secretary of the W.V.F.N.C.A. Congratulations and thanks are due to Greg. and Margaret for their part in holding the clubs together.

A fly past was staged by a squadron of yellow-tailed black cockatoos to begin the Sunday programme. Those who followed Ken Hammond to the Eel Factory were fascinated by this strange vertebrate animal which has a larva stage like an insect, and decides whether it wants to be a male or female when it grows up. At Lake Goldsmith, Ken also directed members to the Wag-tail's nest in the Telecom Toot, and to Thornbills and Goldfinch's nests. The Mt. Erip excursion was repeated by popular demand, and the second Enfield and B.C.C. excursions provided much interest to many more members.

Many visitors were reluctant to leave the idyllic surroundings of the C.E.B.S. camp, and stayed for afternoon tea. The amenities of the camp had proved excellent for the campout.

Rob. Borch.

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#### ENFIELD FOREST PARK EXCURSION 8/10/78.

On a beautiful sunny day a convoy of 8 cars turned down Hansen's Road off the Colac Highway and members enjoyed the prolific wildflowers this part of the forest has to offer. Trees were mainly Peppermints and Stringybark, a few Cherry ballart and masses of Prickly Moses (A. verticillata) and Prostrate Wattle (A. aculeatissima). The most common Pea flower was Pultenaea gunii.

At ground level the Ivy-leaf (V. nederacea) and Showy violets (Viola betonicifolia) were beautiful. Also noted were Hardenbergia violacea, Comesperma volubile, Tetratheca ciliata and Kennedia prostrata.

After lunch we were joined by 5 more car loads and made for Trealor's Rd. and Grubbed Rd. Orchids were very plentiful including Dwarf greenhood (Pterostylis nana), Nodding greenhood (P. nutans), Maroon-hood (P. pedunculata) Bird orchid (Chiloglottis gunii) and the Mayfly orchid (Acianthus caudatus).

An echidna in the hollow base of a tree created 5.



interest, as did one very large red, and two grey kangaroos sighted near the clay pits on the way home. Also near the clay pits, one very boggy patch of road - negotiated with the help of Edwin Bedggood and many branches from dead trees. A lot of use a "Road Closed" sign, the exit end of the lane!!

B. Gray.

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#### A TIRED MIGRANT.

On a Sunday morning recently I found a Fan-tailed cuckoo on the back lawn. It appeared to be uninjured, but was apparently too tired or weak to move, and though it could perch on a finger, it could barely keep its eyes open.

After turning the hose on our tortoiseshell cat, who was watching with apparent disinterest from the garage roof, and driving her indoors, what to do for the best? The bird's beak is very small and sharp and would have probably been damaged if I had tried to force feed. I moved it to a somewhat safer part of the lawn and gave it some grain and mince which it hardly deigned to inspect. Next on the menu was a mixture of milk, whisky and sugar and held in a teaspoon so that the cuckoo's beak was tilted back. To my relief it appeared to swallow quite a reasonable amount of the "tonic".

Then my younger boy and I had a further attempt and also photographed the bird in situ and being fed. A move to perch the bird on my hand for a further shot - and away it flew, quite strongly, for about 20 metres into a small tree. I didn't pursue it any further - I hope it survives.

F. Harrap.

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#### PARROTS.

A good day had been spent on Sunday 10th Sept. at Swan Island for observers in the Orange-bellied Parrot Survey. Up to 17 parrots had been sighted, flying and feeding on arthrocnemum in the almost exact location of the previous sighting. Later in the day Margaret Cameron observed them roosting in the lower branches of



arthrocnemum. 7 to 10 were seen in wattle trees near the waterhole, including 6 lined up at the water's edge as if to drink. One flew off very high towards the military installations. The survey is involving a number of our members.....

(Excerpt from Geelong F.N.C. Newsletter No. 154. Oct. 1978)

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### MONOCULTURE - MAN'S FORESTRY MANIPULATION

Forestry Departments of the various states have a policy of planting desirable forests - usually various species of pines or selected eucalypts - on specially cleared native bushlands or utilising already cleared farmlands no longer regarded as economic. This may be justified economically but there are many pitfalls such as devastating insect attack or fierce bush fires which can almost completely remove, perhaps 20 years work, in a few hours.

One such problem recently investigated by CSIRO and APM Forests officers has been the devastation - up to 40% of the plantation of *Eu. grandis* or flooded gum on cleared farmlands in the Bellinger - Kalang River area of Northern N.S.W. by Yellow-tailed Black cockatoo seeking the grubs or larvae of a large goat moth. The grub - may grow when mature up to 18 cm long - burrows in the tree trunks up to about 1 metre above ground. The cockatoo after locating the mature grub, proceeds to dig with its powerful beak into the trunk frequently, so damaging the trunk that the tree soon falls.

The Research team found the plantations heavily infested by the grubs but only light infestation in native forest. The big question was how to reduce the damage so caused. One suggested method was to reduce stress on early growth in the young plantations by minimising competition from pasture grasses using selected herbicides or additional fertiliser.

Another method was that as the cockatoo avoids dense undergrowth - experiencing difficulty in flight take-off and getting to lower trunk and here the grub



is - such understorey development should be encouraged. Within 8 months of clearing understorey from a test plot all the exposed galleries found had been attacked by the cockatoos.

By contrast in a nearby control area not cleared none of the galleries found had been touched.

Ecos. 17 C.S.I.R.O.

(Contributed P. Fry)

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### MIRACLES OF NATURE.

Dinosaurs have disappeared. For nearly 100 million years they dominated the earth and then they vanished. In spite of their great size - perhaps because of it - they could not adapt themselves to changing conditions. Quite suddenly they became extinct.

But at the same time thousands of other creatures were learning how to survive. Gradually they evolved new characteristics, new ways of living which enabled them to change with the changing world. Today there are more than 300,000 species of plant, more than 1,000,000 species of animal, all of which owe their existence to the ability of their ancestors to adapt. And during the process, which has taken millions of years and is still going on, they have adapted in different ways.

Some live in marshes, swamps and rivers, some in deserts, some in countries of tropical summers and freezing winters. In the fight for survival each one has evolved a different method of existing in its particular environment and these differences have led to extraordinary and almost unbelievable variations in the animals and plants themselves, the staggering range of shapes and colours between a strand of floating pondweed and the great sequoias of North America, a harvest mouse and a hippopotamus.

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